schemes/programmes being implemented by different Ministries/Departments are as per the provisions of National Policy for Farmers, 2007. Besides, the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) of major pulses, oilseeds, coarse cereals and sugarcane have also been increased significantly during 2008-09.

Suicide pact by farmers of Palamu district

1498. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:
SHRIMATI MOHSINA KIDWAI:
SHRI N.K. SINGH:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that farmers of drought prone Palamu district in Jharkhand have signed a suicide pact;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether the failure of monsoon and burden of debt are the main factors forcing farmers to take a decision to commit suicide;

(d) if so, whether Union Government proposes to take any effective step to help the farmers who are under severe burden of debt; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) No, Sir. Government of India is not aware of any such pact. However, when such a report was published in a newspaper, the Government of Jharkhand got the matter enquired into, through the Deputy Commissioner, Palamu. While the people were disturbed due to successive failures of 3 monsoons, there was no such suicide pact despite instigation by an individual.

(d) and (e) In order to address the problem of indebtedness of farmers, a scheme of Debt Waiver and Debt Relief for Farmers has been implemented in all districts of the country. As per provisional figures, a total of 3.01 crores small and marginal farmers and 0,67 crores other farmers have benefited from the scheme involving debt waiver and debt relief of Rs.65,318.33 crores. Under the Agricultural Debt Waiver and Debt Relief Scheme, 2008, farmers with more than 2 hectares of land holding, can now pay 75% of their overdues by 31.12.2009 instead of 30.06.2009. Besides this, in the Union Budget 2009-10, there is a proposal to set up a Task Force to look into the issue of loans to taken by the farmers from private money lenders.

Agriculture becoming unremunerative

1499. SHRI KAMAL AKHTAR:
SHRI NAND KISHORE YADAV:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that day by day agriculture is becoming unremunerative and farmers are falling into debt trap;

(b) if so, what has been done by Government to provide better returns for their crops;

(c) whether Government has conducted/ would conduct any survey about unremunerative agriculture particularly in Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) fixed by the Government provides remunerative prices to farmers. The Government's price policy for agricultural commodities seeks to ensure remunerative prices to the growers for their produce with a view to encourage higher investment and production, and to safeguard the interest of consumers by making available supplies at reasonable prices.

The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP), while formulating its recommendations on price policy considers a number of important factors which include cost of production. The cost of production taken into account includes all paid out costs, besides cash and kind expenses on use of material inputs, irrigation charges including cost of diesel/electricity for operation of pump sets, etc. Besides, cost of production includes imputed value of wages of family labour and rent for owned land. The cost also covers depreciation of farm machinery and buildings. As such, the cost of production covers not only actual expenses in cash and kind but also imputed value of owned assets including land and family labour.

During 2008-09, MSP's of Kharif crops were raised substantially over their 2007-08 level. The increase ranged between 29 percent in case of Arhar (Tur) and 94 per cent in case of Nigerseed. To be remunerative, the MSPs fixed for 2008-09 season cover the all-India cost of production as projected by CACP for the respective crops. MSP is in the nature of a minimum guaranteed price for the farmers offered by the Government for their produce in case the market prices fall below that level. If the market offers higher price than MSP, the farmers are free to sell at that price. In order to improve availability of credit to farmers, the Government in June, 2004 announced measures for doubling of flow of credit to agriculture sector within a period of three years. During 2007-08, the Banks disbursed Rs.2,54,657 crore against the target of Rs,2,25,000 crore.

(c) and (d) No specific study has been conducted by the Government and, at present is there no proposal for the same.

Steps to protect fishermen in coastal areas

1500. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:
PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:
Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the new coastal security measures taken by Government has directly affected the livelihood of fishermen;

(b) if so, the facts and details thereof;

(c) whether Government has since taken any steps to protect the fishermen in coastal areas; and